[30th January 1923

Re-arrangement of circles in the Public Works Department.

719 Q.—Mr. P. Siva Rao: Will the hon. the Minister for Education and Public Works and the hon. the Law Member be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the third circle of the Public Works Department comprising the Ceded districts and Chittoor has been abolished; if so, what were the reasons which led to the abolition;

(*b*) whether the Tanjore and the South Arcot districts now comprised in the fifth circle have been tacked on to the other circles and the Madras city and the Chingleput districts have been added to the present third circle and the Madras City is made the headquarters of the newly-reconstituted third circle and Bellary has, therefore, ceased to be the headquarters;

(*c*) whether it is a fact that a building was recently purchased at a cost of about Rs. 20,000 for the quarters of the Superintending Engineer at Bellary, what the Government propose to do with it in future;

(*d*) whether the Government recognize that the Ceded districts are famine-stricken and always require a Superintending Engineer in their midst for the promotion of irrigation and other protective schemes in them and whether the Chief Engineer cannot be placed in direct charge of the works in the City of Madras;

(*e*) what the Government propose to do with the disbanded establishments attached to the Superintending office at Bellary; and

(*f*) whether the question of the reorganization of the Circles (Public Works) was placed before the Standing Committee (Public Works) and their sanction obtained to the new scheme; if not, whether the Government intend consulting the Standing Committee in the matter?

A.—(*a*) The III Circle has not yet been abolished, but it has been decided to do so as a measure of retrenchment owing to the present financial stringency and effect to this decision will be given shortly.

(*b*) On the abolition of the present III Circle of superintendence with headquarters at Bellary, the divisions now in that Circle, viz., Bellary, Kurnool and Madanapalle divisions, will form part of the present V Circle of superintendence with headquarters at Madras. The Cauvery and the Vennar divisions now in the V Circle will be transferred to the present VI Circle and the South Arcot division of the V Circle will be transferred to the present IV Circle.

(*c*) The Superintending Engineer's residence at Bellary was purchased in 1911 at a cost of Rs. 19,000. On the abolition of the III Circle, the residence will be allotted to some other Government officer in the locality who is in need of quarters.

(*d*) The Government are aware that the Ceded Districts are subject to famine conditions, but they do not consider that a special Superintending Engineer is necessary for these districts only. When, however, famine works on a large scale are started there with special subdivisions or divisions, the question of posting a special Public Works Department officer to supervise them will be considered.

The Government do not consider the proposal to place the works in the City of Madras under the Chief Engineer feasible.

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(e) Every endeavour will be made to provide the discharged men with suitable employment elsewhere. Such of those as cannot be provided with employment will be retired in accordance with the rules in the Civil Service Regulations.

(f) The question of the redistribution was not placed before the Public Works Department Advisory Committee as the Government did not consider this necessary.

Election of district board presidents.

720 Q.—MR. P. SIVA RAO: Will the hon. the Minister for Local Self-Government be pleased to state whether the Government intend to confer on any district board or boards the franchise of electing its or their own president; and if so, which of them?

A.—The Government do not propose to issue any general order at present. Applications received from individual boards will be considered on their merits.

Alleged famine conditions in Anantapur district.

721 Q.—MR. P. SIVA RAO: Will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(a) whether it is a fact that the Revenue Divisional Officer of Penukonda framed certain charges against the village officers of Agali in the Madakasira taluk for inducing ryots to put in applications for takkavi loans and for making certain alleged false reports as to the prevalence of famine conditions in their villages; and called upon them to appear before him on 29th November 1922 and show cause why they should not be punished; what has been the result of these proceedings; and whether the Government will be pleased to call for the papers and lay them on the table of the House;

(b) whether there is any difference on the question of the existence of famine conditions between the Revenue Divisional Officer and the Local Member of the Legislative Council Mr. T. Sivasankaram; and

(c) whether the Government propose to order an independent inquiry in the same matter?

A.—(a) The Government understand that the Revenue Divisional Officer took proceedings against certain village officers whom he suspected of inducing ryots to take loans with the object of taking commission and that the proceedings have been subsequently dropped. The Government do not think that any useful purpose will be served by calling for the papers and laying them on the table.

(b) Yes.

(c) A resolution on the same matter has been tabled and the Government will explain their attitude when that resolution is discussed.